

Message Text

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R 150845 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 183

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 6357

EO 11652 N/A

TAGS: OREP, PFOR, VS

SUBJECT: SENATOR EDWARD W. BROOKE MEETS PRG DELEGATE IN SAIGON

1. ON APRIL 10, 1973, SENATOR EDWARD W. BROOKE CALLED ON MAJOR GENERAL HOANG ANH TUAN, THE ACTING CHIEF OF THE PRG DELEGATION TO THE TWO- PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION (TPJMC). TUAN' S DEPUTY, COLONEL VO DONG GIANG, WAS ALSO PRESENT. GIANG WAS THE PRINCIPAL PRG SPOKESMAN AT THE MEETING WHICH LASTED SLIGHTLY OVER TWO HOURS.

2. ASSISTANCE TO INDOCHINA

A. SENATOR BROOKE BEGAN BY STATING HE HAD COME TO SOUTHEAST ASIA TO INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITIES OF NON- DISCRIMINATROY AID TO ALL THE COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. SENATOR BROOKE SAID HE WISHED TO HEAR ALL SIDES OF THE ISSUE ON THIS QUESTION. TO THIS END HE HAD TALKED WITH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSTION OFFICIALS IN PHNOM PENH, WITH ROYAL LAO AND PATHET LAO OFFICIALS IN VIENTIANE. HE HAD MET WITH AMBASSADOR MICHEL GAUVIN, CHIEF OF THE CANADIAN DELGATION, AND LT. GENERAL PHAM QUOC THUAN, CHIEF OF THE GVN DELEGATION TO THW TWO- PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION. SNEATOR BROOKE ALSO REMARKED THAT HE HAD MADE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD UNFORTUNATELY BROKEN IT.

B. COLONEL VO DONG GIANG ASKED IF THE UNITED STATES WOULD CONTRIBUTE AID TO BOTH THE PRG AND THE GVN UNDER THE PRESENT POLITICAL CON- DITIONS.

SENATOR BROOKE REPLIED THAT IN HIS VIEW THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS WOULD NOT VOTE ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR INDOCHINA UNTIL THE PARTIES
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CARRIED OUT FULLY THE PRESENT PEACE TREATY, TO INCLUDE THE FOR-

MATION OF A SINGLE, DULY ELECTED GOVERNMENT FOR ALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM.

(COMMENT: LIBERATION RADIO ON APRIL 12 INCORRECTLY REPEATED THAT SENATOR BROOKE HAD AGREED THAT " IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A GOVERNMENT, US CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE CHanneLED THROUGH THE TWO PRESENT ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE SOUTH, THE PRGSV AND SAIGON ADMINISTRATION." END COMMENT.)

C. THE SENATOR POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT ASSISTANCE ABOVE AND BEYOND THAT PERMITTED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT, WHICH ALLOWED THE US TO GIVE THER VN GENERAL ECONOMIC AID, AS WELL AS MILITARY AID ON A REPLACEMENT BASIS. GIANG AGREED THAT THE PARIS AGREEMENT DID NOT PROHIBIT ECONOMIC AID AND ALLOWED MILITARY AID ON A REPLACEMENT BASIS. BUT HE MAINTAINED THAT ECONOMIC AID GIVEN TO THE GVN DID NOT BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM.

E. PRISONERS

A. SENATOR BROOKE NOTED THAT HE BELIEVED AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM HAD BEEN AN ERROR. BUT THE SENATOR EMPHASIZED THAT THE PRG SHOULD MAKE NO MISTAKE- THE CONGRESS WOULD VOTE NO AID TO THE DRV OR TO THE PRG AS LONG AS THE QUESTION OF UNITED STATES PRISONERS WAS NOT RESOLVED AND UNTIL A SERIOUS EFFORT WAS MADE TO FIND AMERICAN MISSING IN ACTION, RETURN BODIES OF AMERICANS WHO DIES IN NORTH VIETNAM AND LOCATE SITES WHERE UNITED STATES PALNES HAD CRASHED. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FELT VERY STRONGLY ABOUT THESE ISSUES AND WOULD NOT PERMIT AID MONEY TO BE SPENT IN INDOCHINA IF THEY WERE NOT RESOLVED. SENATOR BROOKE REMARKED THAT THE PRG SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS WERE POLITICIANS, AND IN THE UNITED STATES POLITICIANS HAD TO FOLLOW THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE.

B. SENATOR BROOKE ASKED IF THE PRG WOULD GURANTEE THE SAFETY OF JOINT RECOVERY TEAMS IN PRG- CONTROLLED AREAS. GIANG EQUIVOCATED, NOTING MERELY THAT THIS ISSUE WAS BEING DISCUSSED BY TWO- PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION.

C. SENATOR BROOKE NOTED THAT HERE HAD BEEN REPORTS OF TORTURE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND THAT THE PATHET LAO HAD REFUSED PERMSSION TO SEARCH IN THEIR TERRITORY FOR THE BODIES OF DEAD AMERICAN AIRMEN.
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GIANG MAINTAINED THAT AMERICAN PRISONERS RELEASED BY THE DRV AND PRG WERE FAR HEALTHIER THAN COMMUNIST PRISONERS HELD BY THE GVN.

4. THE CEASEFIRE

A. SNEATOR BROOKE ASKED ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. GIANG REPLIED IN STANDARD TERMS THAT " MR. THIEU" WAS SABOTAGING THE PARIS AGREEMENT BY REFUSING TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WERE " TWO ADMINISTRATIONS, TWO ARMIES, AND THREE POLITICAL FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM " SNEATOR BROOKE ASKED FOR CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF GVN VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE. GENERAL TUAN REPLIED THAT ARVN WAS MOUNTING MILITARY OPERATIONS INTO LIBERATED AREAS. TUAN FURTHER CLAIMED THAT THE GVN HAD REFUSED TO GURANTEE " THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES" OF PRG DELEGATES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

5. DOWNED HELICOPTERS

A. SENATOR BROOKE ASKED ABOUT THE TWO ICCS HELICOPTERS WHICH HAD BEEN DOWNED IN QUANG TRI. GIANG REPLIED THE HELICOPTERS HAD MET AN " ACCIDENT" THE CAUSE WAS UNKNOWN AND WAS BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE PRG. GIANG SAID THAT HE COULD NEVERTHELESS ASSURE THE SENATOR

THAT NO MISSILES HAD BEEN FIRED AT THE HELICOPTERS. THE SENATOR ASKED HOW GIANG COULD MAKE SUCH AN ASSURANCE, IF THE CAUSE WERE UNKNOWN.

GIANG REPLIED BECAUSE THE PRG HAD CHECKED WITH ITS TROOPS IN THE AREA

B. GIANG ALLEGED THAT THE TWO HELICOPTERS HAD STRAYED ABOUT 25 KILOMETERS OFF COURSE. SENATOR BROOKE REPLIED HE FOUND IT OFF THAT THE AIRCRAFT HAD GONE OFF COURSE, SINCE HE UNDERSTOOD A PRG REPRESENTATIVE WAS NAVIGATING THE HELICOPTERS.

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C. GIANG CONTINUED THAT THE HELICOPTERS HAD GONE OVER AN AREA WHERE THERE WERE " CONTINUING HOSTILITIES". SENATOR BROOKE COUNTERED THAT HE WAS A LAWYER BY TRAINING AND PROFESSION. HE HAD BEEN UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE AREA IN QUESTION WAS CONTROLLED BY THE PRG. BUT AS A LAWYER, THE TERM, " CONTINUING HOSTILITIES" MEANT THAT TWO SIDES WERE FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER. THEREFORE, FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM MUST BEEN FIGHTING WITH FORCES OF THE PRO-VISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. THE SENATOR ASKED IF HIS SUP-POSITION WERE CORRECT.

D. GIANG REPLIED THAT THE SENATOR WAS WRONG; THE AREA WAS CON-TROLLED BY THE PRG. THE SENATOR REPLIED THAT IF THIS WERE THE CASE, THE FORCES OF THE PRG MUST HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR DOWNING THE TWO HELICOPTERS, SINCE THESE FORCES WERE THE ONLY ONES PRESENT. THE SENATOR'S ANSWER WAS MET BY SILENCE FOR SEVERAL SECONDS; THEN GIANG REPLIED SOMEWHAT WEAKLY THAT THE SENATOR DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE TRUE SITUATION IN VIETNAM: ARVN OFTEN LAUNCHED COMMANDO RAIDS INTO AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE PRG.

6. CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING

A. SENATOR BROOKE CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE HAD SPOKEN FRANKLY AND HOPED HIS INTERLOCUTORS HAD DONE THE SAME. HE ASKED THE PRG DELEGATION TO REPORT HIS VIEWS TO THEIR LEADERS IN HANOI AND SOUTH VIETNAM.

7. BIOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

A. MAJOR GENERAL TUAN, THE OSTENSIBLE ACTING HEAD OF THE PRG DELEGATION, WAS INEPT AND UNABLE TO GRASP THE ISSUES AT HAND. OFTEN, HE WAS APPARENTLY SO ILL AT EASE THAT HE COULD NOT ANSWER THE SIMPLEST

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QUESTIONS. SENATOR BROOKE, FOR EXAMPLE, ASKED WHETHER THE ARVN GUARDS AROUND CAMP DAVIS WERE TO PROTECT THE PRG OR TO HARASS THEM. TUAN JUST SMILED BLANKLY, SENATOR BROOKE AT ONE POINT ASKED HOW THE GVN RESPONDED TO PRG CHARGES THAT SAIGON WAS VIOLATING THE CEASEFIRE. TUAN REPLIED (QUITE HONESTLY) THAT THE GVN FOR ITS PART ACCUSED THE PRG OF VIOLATING THE CEASEFIRE. COLONEL GIANG SHOOK HIS HEAD IN DISMAY AT TUAN'S ANSWER.

B. TUAN WORE GLASSES AND DIDNOT APPEAR TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH OR FRENCH. HE WAS OF MEDIUM BUILD AND ABOUT 5 FEET 6 INCHES TALL. HE SPOKE WITH A CENTRAL VIETNAMESE ACCENT. HE WAS VERY PALE AND HAD A RATHER POOR COMPLEXION.

C. GIANG OBVIOUSLY EXERCISED MORE REAL POWER THAN TUAN. GIANG QUICKLY TOOK OVER THE DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR BROOKE AFTER IT BECAME APPARENT THAT TUAN COULD NOT CARRY THE BALL. GIANG SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY AND SELF- CONFIDENCE. HE SUNDERSTOOD SOME ENGLISH. HE

WAS ABOUT 5 FEET 4 INCHES TALL AND OF SLIGHT BUILD. (GIANG IS A MEMBER OF THE NLF CENTRAL COMMITTEE. FROM JULY 1963 UNTIL APRIL 1964 HE HEADED THE NLF OFFICE IN HAVANNA. ACCORDING TO HIS OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY, HE WAS BORN IN TAM KY, QUANG TIN PROVINCE IN 1921.)
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